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Perceptions of Principal Leadership on Teacher Morale

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PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHER MORALE

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with deep love and affection to my mother, the late Catherine Gadson Ross, my first role model of strength, hard-work, determination, and unconditional love. Also, the late Dr. Evelyn Sims France and the late Dr. Daniel Blease Ross, my education mentors. I love and miss you all so much! I only wish the three of you could be here to witness this accomplishment.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what leadership behaviors high school teachers perceive as having an impact on teacher morale. This qualitative study explored the oral history of nine teachers from various high schools across South Carolina through semi-structured interviews. Various factors emerged regarding principal behaviors and characteristics that impacted teacher morale. The personal experiences shared by these teachers provided an insight of the actions and behaviors that increased or reduced morale. The study identified four factors that increased morale: (1) administrative support and trust; (2) recognition; (3) positive relationships; and (4) positive school environment. Factors that decreased morale were negative administrative behavior and district office mandates. Their stories highlight what school leaders can do to enhance their leadership practices and consequently improve teacher morale and student achievement and those practices in which they should exercise caution.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Ultimately, leadership is not about glorious crowning acts. It's about keeping your team focused on a goal and motivated to do their best to achieve it, especially when the stakes are high, and the consequences really matter. It is about laying the groundwork for others' success, and then standing back and letting them shine.” Chris Hadfield

School leadership is an essential aspect in school administration because of its influencing role to the achievement of school goals (Gyang, 2018). School effectiveness can be enhanced through the motivation of teachers, the teachers' feelings toward school and school atmosphere created. This feeling can be described as the spirit (morale) teachers, where it will affect the motivation of teachers and student achievement (Abdullah, Yiing, & Ling, 2016, p. 53). Accountability mandates have put teachers under a great deal of pressure. Although *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* is a thing of the past, the new accountability paradigm, *Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA)* is scheduled for implementation in the 2017-2018 school year. *ESSA* gives states and school districts the power to make decisions regarding testing, teacher quality, fixing failing schools, and closing the achievement gap (Klein, 2016). This new law has some components of *NCLB* such as yearly tests in reading and math in grades 3-8, one time in high school, and reporting test scores (Klein, 2016). Under *ESSA*, states and districts have the flexibility to decide what tests students take and on the high school level, they can choose to use the SAT or ACT instead of the state exam (Klein, 2016). With *ESSA*, many of the decisions

about how to evaluate student performance, improve schools, and teacher accountability will be made by the states and districts. With the uncertain changing dynamics of school accountability, student achievement remains the focus and results on standardized tests is still the method used to determine student performance. Whatever mandates individual states and school districts decide, it is the teachers who must put into action these directives. The stress of meeting educational goals and change in leadership or policies can have an impact on teacher morale (Govindarajan, 2012). Education trends have taken a toll on teacher morale because teachers are often blamed for low student test scores, although many factors affecting student achievement are beyond their control (Noddings, 2014, Guthrie, 2010). Teachers are the individuals who have the most contact with students in a school setting, have an enormous amount of responsibilities, and can have a great impact on a child's life. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are given the tools and support they need to provide students the best learning experience possible. High teacher morale makes teaching pleasant for teachers, learning more pleasant for students, and creates an environment conducive to learning (Govindarajan, 2012; Binova, 2002). Principals set the tone of the school and can therefore foster a climate of respect, recognition, and appreciation which in turn contributes to teacher job satisfaction (Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, & Ma, 2011). Teachers must be nurtured, supported, and valued by the broader community (Bivona, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

The success of any institution of learning is predicated upon its teachers. Teachers are the backbone of schools and instrumental in fostering student achievement. Their value cannot be underestimated and yet each year there are far too many teachers leaving

the profession. In the United States, eight percent of teachers leave the profession every year (Darling-Hammond, 2016). There are many reasons why teachers are leaving such as low salaries, working conditions, class sizes, accountability, and standardized testing (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Protheroe, 2006). The stress of meeting state and district mandates without adequate support from administration could be the breaking point for some teachers. It is imperative to create a learning environment that affords teachers the opportunity to do their job with as little stress as possible. By nurturing an environment focused on learning, principals can support both high levels of student success and high teacher morale (Protheroe, 2006). School processes particularly career and working conditions, staff collegiality, administrative support, positive student behavior, and teacher empowerment are positively associated with teacher job satisfaction (Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, & Ma, 2012). The morale of teachers can have far-reaching implications for student learning, the health of the teacher, and the sounding of the school (Bivona, 2002).

Senechal et. al. (2016) study revealed that the teachers' work experience was influenced by the condition and culture of the school and being satisfied was tied into their sense of efficacy, working with students and relationships with their colleagues. They concluded that morale could be viewed as an individual versus group phenomenon. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) study on teacher efficacy and burnout concluded that there was a connection between teacher efficacy, burnout and school context and job satisfaction. Likewise, Klassen and Ming (2010) study on teacher efficacy, years of experience, and job satisfaction discovered that teacher efficacy varied with years of teaching experience and also influenced job satisfaction. The topic of teacher morale is a

complex one and can be studied from varying perspectives, teacher efficacy being one of them. Although, teacher efficacy is a possible variable, for the purpose of this study, the construct of teacher morale will be viewed from the lens of the teacher's perspective on principal behavior.

A principal's daily behavior plays a vital role in the environment of the school (Rowland, 2008). School leaders have a big responsibility in providing a climate and culture that promotes teaching and learning. The principal can make a difference in how successful a school becomes. Additionally, the principal's role as chief operating officer plays an important role in making the school atmosphere conducive to student learning and teacher morale.

Teacher satisfaction has decreased to its lowest level in 25 years with 51% of teachers from a MetLife Survey responding that they feel immense stress multiple days of the week (*Phi Delta Kappan*, 2013). Budget and accountability pressures have taken their toll on teacher morale, instilling a sense of anxiety in many educators (Carpenter & Pease, 2012). Today's accountability paradigm has forced teachers to take on too much work in the push to raise test scores (Carpenter & Pease, 2012). Teachers have the enormous task of educating every child that walks through their door each year. They work hours beyond the school day and on many occasions, use their own money to supply items needed for their students. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide a classroom setting where learning can take place. However, this cannot happen if teachers are too stressed or burned out to do their jobs effectively. School leaders have the arduous task of managing the educational environment. Their leadership provides the impetus for the climate in which students learn and teachers teach. According to Webster's Dictionary

(2010), morale is a person's mental state that is exhibited by assurance, control, and motivation to perform a task. Teacher morale is defined by Bentley and Rempel (1980) as the degree to which the needs of a person are satisfied, and the person's perception of how the job situation brought the state of satisfaction of the worker to fruition. Improving teacher morale has many benefits in that it can help teachers to maintain a positive attitude and be happier at work (Govindarajan, 2012).

Nature of the Study

This will be a qualitative study that will use semi-structured interviews with teachers from high schools across the state of South Carolina. The researcher intends to investigate the impact of leadership on teacher morale from the teachers' perspective.

Research Questions

The research questions are: 1) What administrative leadership characteristics do high school teachers feel contribute to morale? 2) What professional experiences do high school teachers feel influences morale?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of leadership on teacher morale. The researcher's aim is to determine what behaviors do principals exhibit that contributes to morale as perceived by teachers. Ask anyone who has had one or more years working in a school whether leadership has made a difference in their work and the answer will be an unhesitating "Yes" (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). No matter who the respondent is, they all seem to know good (and bad) leadership when they experience it

(Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Furthermore, most people can identify particular behaviors of school leaders that they remember as being effective (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). The principal must be the leader of this effort to boost morale and must do so in collaboration with staff (Wilson, 2012). Supportive leadership through a collaborative approach promotes congruence and trust between administrators and teachers, thus improving morale (Dupree, n.d.).

Conceptual Framework

Effective Leadership Practices

Effective leadership practices are the conceptual lens for viewing characteristics and behaviors exhibited by principals that impact teacher morale. The role of the principal has changed considerably over time and is constantly changing as accountability measures continue to be mandated from policymakers. In the past, a position that was once perceived as managerial responsibilities, exerting power, and requiring obedience has shifted to change agent, yielding power, distributing responsibilities, and a focus on teaching and learning (Alvoid & Black, 2014). The primary emphasis for the modern-day principal is student achievement and creating an environment that supports high quality instruction and learning. That is not to say the traditional role of the principal is obsolete or is no longer in practice. In fact, there seems to be an amalgam of the old and the new. Principals are now tasked with being instructional leaders, human resource developers, digital leaders in addition to managing the everyday operations of the school environment such as discipline and public relations (Alvoid & Black, 2014). The need for high performing schools with a quality teaching

staff must be met with effective leadership practices. Hence forth, the leadership styles that are portrayed by principals play an essential part in all facets of the school (Smith, 2016) and is a critical factor in the school effectiveness (Hoy & Smith, 2007).

There are four leadership styles that principals should understand and use collectively or interchangeably as an integrated leadership model (Smith, 2016). The following is a brief description of each leadership style.

Transformational Leadership - Transformational leadership has been shown to have a positive effect on the school environment. This form of leadership focuses on motivating members of the school organization to work at high levels by meeting their needs and creating a culture and climate of respect, support, and encouragement. The leader and members work towards a shared goal and are committed to the vision and mission of the organization. The leader empowers and inspires the followers to work collaboratively, be risk-takers and think outside of the box to achieve success (Smith, 2016; Menon, 2014; Balyer, 2012).

Transactional Leadership - Transactional leadership style maintains the status quo and operates in the confines of that system. This type of leadership styles follows a process of rewards and punishments based on performance level (Smith, 2016). Instead of focusing on and building up the followers to accomplish the goals of the organization, it is completing the objective of the organization that is paramount. Leaders can be passive or active in their style of management and use rewards as motivation and to improve job performance (Smith, 2016).

Instructional Leadership - Instructional leadership style attention is devoted to student learning and assisting teachers in improving instruction to maximize student achievement (Smith, 2016). The leader's vision for the school should have student learning at the forefront and provide teachers with the toolkit that is needed to improve teaching and learning. According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), "School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning." Also, school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). The influence of the principal as an instructional leader is extremely important and using this style of leadership is one piece of the integrated leadership model.

Inspirational Leadership - A relatively new style of leadership practice is inspirational leadership. The basis of this type of leadership style is to provide emotional support to members of the organization. Employees need to know that the leader genuinely cares about their well-being on a personal and professional level. The four attributes of this type of leadership style are courage, love, authenticity, and grace (Secretan, 1999 as cited by Smith, 2016). Secretan (1999) as cited by Smith (2016), describe individuals possessing this leadership style must have high integrity, be consistent, dependable, transparent, steady, loyal, and reliable.

These four leadership styles when employed by school leaders have the potential to create an effective school environment. Principals set the tone of the school and it is important that the physical environment be a place where teachers want to teach, and students want to learn. The school climate and culture must be positive, safe, caring,

respectful, and supportive. Smith (2016) states, “Leadership plays an integral role in building positive school culture. When you step into a school, the culture of the school is immediately evident and is a major indicator of the efficiency of the school.”

The principal as the primary school leader must always be cognizant of their decisions, actions, and behaviors daily and how it can impact the morale of teachers and students. It is their duty to protect, support, and encourage their teachers. Smith (2016) believes that principals would do well by being good communicators, encourage professional growth and collaboration, involve teachers in the making decisions, and share leadership responsibilities. These factors increase job satisfaction and morale among staff members (Smith, 2016).

“Another way of understanding leadership is to compare the behaviors of effective and ineffective leaders to see how successful leaders behave” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012, p.106). As a result, the change from examining what effective leaders are to what they do, and that personal traits and characteristics probably influence their leadership behavior or style (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). The University of Iowa conducted a study on the effects of different styles of leadership behavior to determine their effects on the attitudes and productivity of subordinates. The leadership types were classified as:

Authoritarian Leadership – Leaders were directive and allowed no participation in decisions. They structure the complete work situation for their subordinates. Leaders took full authority and assumed full responsibility from initiation to task completion.

Democratic Leadership – Leaders encouraged group discussion and decision making. Subordinates were informed about conditions affecting their job and encouraged to express their ideas and make suggestions.

Laissez-Faire Leadership – Leaders gave complete freedom to the group and left it up to subordinates to make decisions on their own. Essentially, leaders provided no leadership.

The results of this study revealed that subordinate preferred the democratic leadership style the best, followed by laissez-faire leadership, and last authoritarian leadership. Additionally, subordinates would rather the chaos associated with laissez-faire leadership over the rigidity of authoritarian leadership, which elicited either aggressive or apathetic behavior from subordinates. Of the two, the laissez-faire behavior produced the greatest amount of aggressive behavior. Lastly, productivity was slightly higher under the authoritarian leader compared to the democratic leader, but lower under the laissez-faire leader (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012, p.106). If principals want to get the most out of their teachers, it is important that they take inventory of their leadership behavior. The ultimate goal is student achievement. The teachers are instrumental in providing the instruction that is needed for student learning to take place. The charge to administrative leadership is to always be open to new ways of how to work better with people in a variety of situations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012, p.131) and to create an environment through their behaviors and practices that motivate teachers to go above and beyond the call of duty to help students achieve academically. Citing Edem (2006), Gyang (2018) also, describes three of the major leadership styles practiced in schools

which are autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. The autocratic leader is task-oriented, democratic is relationship-oriented and laissez-faire is free- rein-oriented.

Operational Definitions

For this study, the following terms are defined as:

Leadership – is the process whereby one individual influences other group members toward the attainment of defined or organizational goals (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012)

Educational Leadership: is usually the responsibility of the school administrators and principals, who strive to create positive change in educational policy and processes.

Principal instructional leadership: principal activity in key dimensions of the school's educational program (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996).

Morale: is a construct that describes the relative mental/emotional valence of positive or negative energy of an individual or of a group of individuals (as in a school staff). It is the result of the perceptions and interpretations of contextually influenced experiences (Meyer, MacMillan, & Northfield, 2009).

Teacher Morale: the degree to which the needs of a person are satisfied, and the person's perception of how the job situation brought the state of satisfaction of the worker to fruition (Bentley & Rempel, 1970). A state of mind determined by the individual's anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of those needs which s/he perceives as significantly affecting her/his total work situation (Evans, 1997).

Motivation: the reasons why you are doing something, or the level of desire you do something (Your Dictionary, 2017); A general desire, need or want that generates the energy required for someone to behave in a way (Leadership-central, 2010).

Limitations

This study is limited by the following issues: the study selected high school teachers with 10-20 years teaching experience across the state of South Carolina who do not have a common leadership experience. As the researcher I will have varying degrees of familiarity with the participants; therefore, my ability to gain trust is not a stable variable. These oral history narrative interviews require participants to recall events and experiences that occurred many years prior to the interview and therefore may contain varying degrees of accuracy. With the participant being the only unit of analysis, the only source of evidence with which to triangulate the data are the comparative narratives from the participant educators. Also, only one interview was conducted for each participant which inhibited gaining deeper knowledge of the participants' experiences for a more thorough analysis.

Significance of the Study

Several years ago, our school had a change in leadership. At the end of the school year before this person took over, there was a meeting in which they were introduced to the faculty and staff by the district superintendent. When given the opportunity to address the faculty as the one who would be leading us for the next school year, this person shared about their family, special talents, educational background and experience, and what I would call their "leadership philosophy." As we left the meeting, different

conversations were going on with individuals saying things like: “He seems like a nice guy.” “I think he is going to be a good principal for our school.” “I heard he was a good person.” “I like what he said.” It was interesting that in just a matter of minutes, this new principal seemed to have made a good impression on the faculty and staff. Fast forward to the beginning of this individuals’ first year at the helm, the formal introduction was quite impressive with a slide presentation reiterating some of the things mentioned at the end of year faculty meeting, this time it was more personal with pictures and interesting stories. Looking around the room, it was apparent that this new leader was different. Exactly how was yet to be discovered. As the school year progressed, the school environment seemed to be changing with teachers, staff members, and students from my viewpoint. As a result, this was a phenomenon I wanted to explore, especially from a teachers’ perspective.

Efforts to raise morale are needed and important (Noddings, 2014). Teacher morale is important because it can have a positive effect on student attitudes and learning (Bivona, 2002) and improve student achievement (Noddings, 2014). The current research on school leadership and teacher morale are slim with regard to qualitative studies that focus on teachers in the high school setting. Most of the studies on the topic of leadership and teacher morale are quantitative or mixed methods and focused on elementary and middle school teachers. Therefore, this study will add to the existing body of knowledge related to teacher morale and principal leadership. There have been several studies that look at the relationship between teacher morale and principal leadership on the elementary and middle school level mostly in urban areas. The present study will focus on the impact of principal leadership as perceived by high school teachers across South

Carolina using an interpretive qualitative research design by way of oral history narratives.

Teachers are a vital thread in the educational tapestry. They are the individuals who have the most contact with students and thus the greatest impact on their achievement. Teachers provide academic content, encouragement and support. They endeavor to assess and meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of every student. However, teachers need to feel valued and supported as they work tirelessly to help students succeed. When teachers have the backing of administration and a working environment with minimal stress, their sense of satisfaction is heightened, and morale is high.

High morale in teachers occurs when teachers are supported and empowered by the principal (MERC, 2016, Govindarajan, 2012). School leaders have an indirect, but positive impact on student learning (Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010). Additionally, the morale of an organization will only be as high as its leader (MERC, 2016). High teacher morale is characterized by interest and enthusiasm for the job in a positive school climate and culture where the leadership morale is high as well (Govindarajan, 2012). Administrators can also help sustain teacher morale by actively standing behind teachers. Teacher morale can be bolstered by the recognition given by administrators (Briggs, 1986). Low teacher morale leads to decreased quality of teaching or productivity, burnout, loss of concern for and detachment from colleagues, greater use of sick leave, and cynical and dehumanized perception of students. A poor relationship with principals and a lack of leadership are factors that can dampen morale and cause teachers to leave the profession (Anhorn, 2008; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007) cited by (Shen, Leslie,

Spybrook, & Ma, 2012). Low leadership morale can produce low teacher morale resulting in reduction in work motivation, dissatisfaction, frustration, and stress (Bivona, 2002).

Effective principals serve as guardians of teachers' instructional time, assist teachers with student discipline matters, allow teachers to develop discipline codes, and support teachers' authority and enforcing policy (Bivona, 2002). Inconsistent behavior on the part of the principal and frequent failure to follow through on decisions contribute to teacher stress (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). The myriad responsibilities of the principal influence all aspects of the school environment.

Statistics shows that seventeen percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Brown, 2015). There are various reasons why teachers are leaving the profession, such as not being prepared, lack of support for new teachers, challenging working conditions, dissatisfaction with compensation, better career opportunities, and personal reasons.

Smith and Andrews (1989) studied 1,200 school principals and found that effective principals are engaged in four areas of strategic interaction with teachers: as resource provider, as instructional resource, as communicator, and as a visible presence (Fullan, 2010). The combination of teacher job satisfaction and positive school culture creates a highly effective learning environment that increases student achievement (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Korkmaz, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Whalstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Research shows that the role of the principal and effective transformational leadership behaviors has a positive influence

on teacher job satisfaction (Bayler, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Lambert, 2006). Additionally, one study found significant links between principal transformational leadership behaviors that increase teacher job satisfaction and high levels of teacher job satisfaction, related to student achievement (Houchard, 2005).

Effective principal leadership has been found to have a direct, significant impact on effective learning environments, teacher quality and effectiveness, and student achievement (Griffith, 2004; Leithwood, Louis, et al., 2004; Ross & Gray, 2006). Results from this study spurred additional studies on school effectiveness that identified principal leadership as having the greatest impact on teacher job satisfaction, teacher quality, effective instruction, and higher levels of academic achievement (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Dinham, 2007; Fullan, 2014). Principals who focus on building relationships with their teachers while setting the direction of the school and empowering teachers to share in instructional decision making demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors (Bayler, 2012; Patterson, Russell, & Stone, 2004; Bruggencate et al., 2012).

Summary of Key Points

This study will examine the leadership behavior of principals as perceived by teachers that impact teacher morale. Through semi-structured interviews with these high school teachers, themes will emerge as teachers share their life history in education and what they feel contributed to their own morale. As school leaders seek ways to improve school effectiveness and ultimately student achievement, it must start with those who have the greatest contact and impact with students and that is our teachers. The goal is to

improve teaching and learning by providing a climate and culture that promotes the best educational experience for all students, while maintaining the morale of teachers.

In Chapter 2, relevant literature used to support this study is reviewed. The review of literature covers current research in the area of teacher morale and principal leadership. The research identifies factors that affect teacher morale, teacher morale and student achievement, and how principal leadership impacts teacher morale.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Teacher Morale

Teacher morale can play a critical role in the success of a school. Teachers comprise the largest portion of the professional body in a school, have the most contact with students throughout the day, and influence the environment of the school. When teachers have negative feelings about their position, they may negatively impact the students and the school and in most instances, when teachers feel positively about their position, they have a positive influence on the students and the school (Crane & Green, 2013). External sources that are overseen by the principal is found to be one of the factors that cause low morale Accountability mandates that are unbalanced may also contribute to loss of motivation by teachers. In addition to not being treated fairly and lack of recognition, low salaries are factors that indicates lack of respect for teachers and thus contributing to low morale. There is a correlation between the culture and climate of a school and the practices of the school principal. There may be many factors that affect teacher morale with some factors having a greater impact than others based on years of experience and politics of the district.

The impact an organization has on the mental state, performance, and meeting the needs of the individual in that organization is the definition of teacher morale. Another definition of teacher morale is the extent to which the individual's needs are fulfilled and their awareness of how the workplace environment contributed to that satisfaction.

Webster's Dictionary (2010), define morale as a person's mental state that is exhibited by assurance, control, and motivation to perform a task.

Teachers have tough jobs in today's U.S. educational climate. Job performance and accountability pressures frequently decrease their morale and undermine job satisfaction (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015). Teacher job dissatisfaction is associated with lower morale and higher turnover thus being detrimental to the functioning of a school (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Park, 2005). Teachers are the bedrock of education. Their roles and responsibilities are many. Gone are the days of old, when they could focus only on teaching and not be burdened with a myriad of non-instructional tasks. Today's teachers may find themselves in many roles throughout the school day – such as counselors, surrogate parents, nurses, peacemaker, referee, and security guard, just to name a few. Because teachers are pulled in many directions, it is important to make sure they feel good about what they are doing and where they are working. The morale of teachers should not be taken lightly, nor thought of as unimportant. Even corporate America understands the importance of the morale of their employees and its relationship to job tenure. If we want to keep a physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy teaching force, attention must be given to morale.

Little attention seems to be given to the fact that there is a morale problem in the teaching profession. Day in and day out, teachers enter their classrooms to educate students under the pressures of accountability. Therefore, it is imperative that superintendents, policy makers, and principals make every effort to take care of the needs of teachers. Teacher morale can have far reaching effects based on the teachers' emotional view of their job and working environment. How teachers view their job, the

environment in which they work, and the profession at large determines their level of satisfaction and can manifest itself in their job performance (He and Xuan, 2002).

Therefore, it is crucial to find ways to improve the morale of teachers. Several ways to improve morale is to make teachers feel valued, a contributing member in decision making, and giving them a voice. Teachers who are satisfied with their job are less likely to leave the profession. In contrast, teachers who are not satisfied may choose to leave the profession altogether (Xiaofu & Qiwen, 2008).

The issue of teacher morale is not just a problem the United States, but it is international as well. Arani and Abbasi (2004), found a significant correlation between job satisfaction, school climate, and morale as well as a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and teachers leaving the profession. The school environment must be conducive to teaching and learning. It is this climate that influences the teachers' ability to do their job effectively.

“Morale is defined as the mental or emotional state (regarding confidence, hope, enthusiasm, etc.) of a person or group engaged in some activity; degree of contentment with one's lot or situation” (Senechal, et.al, 2016). Morale is a complex idea and is often associated with other concepts such as burnout and job satisfaction. However, Senechal, et.al., 2016, view morale as distinct and connected to the how a teacher fits in the school organization and the decision to stay or leave. Morale can be either high or low and is affected by many things, such as teacher perceptions, experiences and working conditions (Senechal et. al, 2016).

Factors that affect Teacher Morale

Student achievement is the primary focus for every school. As such, the need to improve the morale of teachers is important so that they may perform their best when educating students. Thus, district superintendents and school principals are keenly aware that teachers need to be armed with resources and support to do their jobs effectively. Accountability mandates with its grandiose expectations often find teachers either not prepared, or do not have the motivation to carry out the needed improvements (Perumal, 2011). Teacher morale is connected to motivation, effort, and job satisfaction (Huysman, 2008), therefore, before principals and district administrators can be change agents it is vital to know the factors that affect teacher morale (Willis & Varner, 2010).

One of the factors that affect teacher morale is lack of recognition. When teachers perceive that their efforts are not being acknowledged, this could result in low morale. Citing studies from (Huysman, 2008; Mackenzie, 2007; Reed, 2010), Willis & Varner (2010), emphasized that teachers were not satisfied with the amount and type of recognition and respect they receive in the districts where the studies were conducted. Negative publicity by mainstream media when unpleasant school incidents occur gives teachers the impression that they are not valued or respected, thus contributing to low morale (Mackenzie, 2007). Recognition that teachers receive also impacts teacher morale. The actions of school and district administrators are important when it comes to teacher morale (Willis & Varner, 2010). Leadership behavior by the school principal and the climate that they create for teaches has an impact on teacher morale. Other practices that impact teacher morale include praise, instructional and technical support, and professional development (Willis & Varner, 2010). Mackenzie (2007) in a mixed method

study of teacher morale found that 97% of respondents identified leadership as the major factor for high teacher

School culture is another factor that is linked to teacher morale. Huysman (2007), study discovered that a school culture where the power structure was distributed and unbalanced resulted in low teacher morale. Also, within this study, teachers cited lack of recognition, low salaries, policies, advancement, and relationship with colleagues as factors that contribute to an unproductive school culture (Huysman, 2007). Supporting these findings is a study by Mackenzie (2007), that revealed teacher morale was affected by the school culture. Willis and Varner (2010) offered the following recommendations to improve school culture such as reducing teacher workload, allocating time for preparation, administrative support, showing appreciation for teachers, and opportunities for teachers to be promoted - which when used by administrators will enhance or change the school culture.

Teacher Morale and Student Achievement

The impact of teacher morale affects many aspects of the school environment. When morale is low, teachers tend to take more “mental health” days because of stressful working conditions (Willis & Varner, 2010). The absence of teachers from the classroom due to excessive personal and sick days could be connected to a decrease in student achievement; while teachers who feel good about their job and the environment in which they work, put more effort into their work and students are the benefactors (Willis & Varner, 2010).

Teachers with low morale can manifest itself in different ways, such as negative work performance and student relationships. Houchard (2005) used the Purdue Teacher

Opinionnaire and students' final grades to study teacher morale and student achievement and found the teachers' mental state and ability to create a positive climate can influence student achievement.

If schools are going to be successful, its teachers must be satisfied with their jobs. Student achievement can be increased in school communities built on teachers' job satisfaction and collegial work relationships (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015). Research shows that school culture influences teacher job satisfaction in various ways although it is uncertain as to what factors have the greatest impact (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015). Additionally, studies have found a strong relationship between teachers' job satisfaction, work environment, and student achievement (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, Kraft, Y Papay, 2012). The impact of teacher dissatisfaction may disrupt the school organizational culture by undermining educational goals, excessive absences, stress, and turnover (Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008; Renzulli, Parrott, & Beattie, 2011). High attrition rates pose major challenges to the effectiveness of transforming schools (Renzulli et al., 2011) especially when these rates are high among new teachers entering the profession (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll & Connor, 2009).

The organizational structure of the school can have a tremendous impact on teacher job satisfaction as well as teaching practices (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015; Renzulli et al., 2011; Perrachione et al., 2008) and is critical because it defines how teachers interact with each other and students (Powers, 2009). Teachers are also more satisfied when they have an input in the decisions that affect where they work (Ladd, 2011; Ingersoll & Connor, 2009).

Allowing teachers to be part of the decision-making process, gives them as a sense of empowerment, reduces stress and possibly lead to greater job satisfaction (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015). Not to mention, valuing teachers' by giving them the opportunity to have a voice in matters related to professional development, curriculum, student affairs, and instructional materials can motivate them to be effective in their educational practices (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003).

Across the United States there is a shortage of teachers. The statistics regarding the attrition of new teachers is staggering. Fifty percent of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years, bringing the need the improve teacher job satisfaction to the forefront (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Studying factors that cause teachers to remain in urban schools past the five- year mark revealed that supportive and inclusive environments where teachers are involved in the decision-making process and quality professional development increased job satisfaction (Waddell, 2010). The impact of teacher job satisfaction affect a teacher's instructional practices if they are not supported (Crane & Green, 2013). Additionally, working conditions, collegial relationships, and administrative support are positively associated with teacher job satisfaction (Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, and Ma, 2012). Administrative support was the key predictor in determining if teachers are satisfied with their jobs, correspondingly, job satisfaction was the major predictor of the teachers' intention to stay in education (Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011) as cited by Crane & Green, 2013. The task of improving student achievement in this age of increased accountability is the responsibility of everyone, but ultimately rests on the shoulders of teachers. Therefore, it is imperative that teacher job satisfaction be

taken into consideration and is deemed paramount in fulfilling the mission of education (Crane & Green, 2013). The behaviors exhibited by school leaders play a pivotal role in improving instruction and maintaining teacher job satisfaction (Crane & Green, 2013).

Principal Leadership

The role of the principal in the context of the school environment is extremely important for promoting student achievement. As the gatekeeper, mediator, facilitator, and manager, the varied responsibilities of the principal can determine the success or failure of the organizational culture if they are not able to navigate the complexities of the school setting. A study by Water, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) showed a significant relationship between leadership and student achievement by leaders who advocate for change, protect, support, and value the individuals of the educational institution. School leaders are responsible for establishing the cultural values within the school but must have buy-in from the teachers to support and enact these values (Kruse & Louis, 2009; Schein, 2010). Having open communication, establishing an environment of shared values and commitment are vital practices for school leaders (Ladd, 2011). Leaders can have a positive or negative impact on achievement, depending on the school or classroom practices they choose to focus their attention (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Principals are key to successful teacher practice by skillfully executing practices that promotes high morale. As the guardians of time and structure, school leadership are instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for collaboration by providing the time needed for teachers to work together (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Giving meaningful feedback on teacher evaluations, providing mentors and instructional coaching are practices that can improve teaching and learning (Childress, 2014). Intense accountability

pressure in public education to meet the academic needs of all students can strain the relationship between the principal and teachers. Principals are responsible for laying the groundwork to improving academic achievement of students by instituting practices and processes as the instructional leader (Lashway, 2002).

Effective leaders know how to choose and use appropriate practices to bring about change to the school culture such as promoting cooperation, cohesion, well-being among staff, and shared purpose and vision of what the school could be like (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Teachers believe they are part of a strong professional community when there is a clear mission, school pride, open communication with leadership, trust and collegial relationship among colleagues, a focus on collective learning, and a sense of belonging (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller, & Mickelson, 2015). Additionally, principals must celebrate good teaching by finding ways to encourage and inspire new teachers, reaffirm the veteran teachers, and recognize the hard-work and dedication that teachers provide from day to day (Childress, 2014).

There are various types of leadership in schools across the country. The responsibilities of school leaders can be daunting when rallying a group of individuals to be committed and engaged in meeting the goals of the organization (Balyer & Ozcan, 2012). This would require school leaders to be methodical in their practices. Leaders must be effective, able to adapt, every changing, team-oriented, effective communicators, problem solvers, and transformational to succeed in the complex school environment (Du Plessis, Conley, & Hlongwane, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Yukl, 2005). Transformational leadership is malleable and affords leaders to monitor and adjust their behaviors to meet the needs of those they lead (Muenjohn & Anderson, 2007).

Transformational leaders are school visionaries, set goals, supportive, and create a culture conducive to teaching and learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Castanheira & Costa, 2011; Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002). In leadership theory, transformational leadership, has been positively related to increased job satisfaction. The value of the relationship between principals and teachers cannot be overlooked. Relationships are an integral part of the school environment and thus affects the culture of the school and student achievement (Barth, 2006). Developing rapport with the faculty and staff can create a ripple effect throughout the school environment (Crane & Green (2013).

The success of an organization is predicated upon positive relationships between the leaders and members of the team. The perception of the leaders by those individuals being led is important to the productivity of an organization. How leaders are perceived by their followers makes a difference in the life of an organization. Building high quality relationships that leads to trust, mutual dependence, support and loyalty which ultimately translates into followers who see leaders as competent, experienced, fair and honest garners the support of those that follow, thus leading to job satisfaction (Crane & Green, 2013).

The influence of a school leader for increasing student achievement is important because they can cultivate excellent teachers and provide working conditions that keep these great teachers in the field (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014). Additionally, principals are the individuals responsible for alleviating the barriers in the working environment that affects teachers' ability to perform high quality instruction for students (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014).

Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Within the first five years, fifty percent of new teachers leave teaching. The cost of teacher turnover is huge when considering how it disrupts the organizational culture and instructional program of the school (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). The reasons teachers are leaving so early in their teaching career has to do with poor working environments as oppose to discontent with their students (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). The working conditions makes a difference in teachers' decision to stay or leave the profession, which ultimately impacts student learning. Teachers who are satisfied plan to remain at schools that have a positive work environment, regardless of the student demographics (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

The principal leadership, school culture, and collegial relationships impact teacher job satisfaction and plans to remain in teaching. Teachers with a supportive administration and working conditions that support teaching and learning are important in improving student achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). In a study by Horng (2009), working conditions especially administrative support, school facilities and class size were more of a factor than teacher salary and student demographics regarding teacher satisfaction. In fact, the study suggests that the greatest determining factor of a teacher's career decision is the school administration (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). It is also worth noting that three social conditions, principal leadership, collegial relationships, and school culture affect teachers' work (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

Relationships between school leaders and teachers affect the overall school climate and culture. A supportive, trusting, and cooperative relationship between the school leadership and teachers will likely foster the same type of relationships between

teachers, parents, and students. In contrast, if the relationship between principals and teachers are frightful, competitive, skeptical, and corrosive, then these qualities will spread throughout the school (Barth, 2006). School leaders and teachers can either diminish or enrich each other's lives and their schools (Barth, 2006), thus studying the affect that principals have on teacher morale is important. The role of the school leader is too crucial and the responsibility of developing relationships with teachers to enhance their performances to improve student achievement (Barth, 2006).

In general, the school climate represents the atmosphere created by the attitudes of principals and teachers that impacts how effective the school will be (Price, 2012). By the same token, research shows that environments of trust, shared vision, and openness create helpful school climate settings (Price, 2012). Equally important is the interpersonal relationships between principals and their teachers' effect on the broader school climate, teacher job satisfaction, and level of commitment (Price, 2012).

Other research reveals that the school leader, the principal, is the central figure in schools and their behavior in establishing healthy relationships directly affect teachers' attitudes and defines the school climate (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Louis et al., 2010). Healthy relationships involve fostering trust, cooperation, and openness and staff input which generates high levels of satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment among faculty (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Moolenaar, Daly, & Slegers, 2010; Stephenson & Baur, 2010; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

The principal sets the tone for the school climate, by establishing trust, which is the foundation for building organizational relationships (Bryk et al., 2010; Bryk &

Schneider, 2002; Tschannen- Moran, 2004). The sphere of influence that the principal has on school practices, such as the attitude and behavior of teachers is a direct relationship, while indirectly influencing student achievement and engagement. The impact of principals on school climate is greater than the effect on instruction and providing a supportive workspace creates a successful learning environment for teachers (Bryk et al., 2010; Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010; Knapp et al., 2010; Portin et al., 2009). In essence, supportive principals strengthen collegial support and unity among staff, impact teachers' professional commitment and school organizational climates (Bryk et al., 2010; Elmore, 2000; Honig et al., 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Principals guide the process of identifying the goals, mission, and vision of the school with the help of faculty and staff, thus the greater the level of involvement and agreement of the mission, the greater the culture and morale (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015).

Summary of Key Points

Principals are the gate-keepers in any school environment. The decisions they make daily can make or break a school and be a determining factor if teachers stay or leave. School leaders must be confident enough to share the load and provide opportunities for teacher to lead, make decisions, and collaborate. Creating a climate and culture where teachers are respected, supported, have opportunities to grow professionally, have their voices heard, are celebrated can make a huge difference in their morale.

In Chapter 3, the methodology is presented for conducting this research. Included is a discussion of the research design, an introduction, role of the researcher, the research

questions, how participants were recruited, context of the study, data collection and how it will be analyzed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methods that will be used to conduct the research. The purpose of this study will be to determine what leadership behaviors exhibited by the principal impact morale according to high school teachers in South Carolina. It will examine high school teachers' perceptions of how the actions of the principal affect morale.

Additionally, teachers from grades nine through twelve and varying subject areas will be interviewed. This study will contribute to the literature on teacher morale and leadership behaviors that impact morale. This chapter addresses the study design, the role of the researcher, questions, context of the study, measures for ethical protection, participation criterion, data collection, trustworthiness, and data analysis.

Introduction

The researcher in qualitative research is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis when studying a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the researcher will seek to explore the issue of morale as it relates to teachers' perceptions based on experiences with school leadership. By interviewing teachers, the researcher will attempt to add to the literature of how participants view the impact of morale by the practices of the principal. Using oral history narrative interviews, the researcher hopes to gain better insight of what teachers identify, observe, and experience that impact their morale.

“Qualitative research is designed to inductively build rather than to test concepts, hypotheses, and theories” (Merriam, 1998, p.45). “Research focused on discovery,

insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, this study was important to further encapsulate the teachers’ perspectives through personal interviews. The primary goal is to discover their own views of morale as it relates to their experiences with administrative leadership and the characteristics they utilize.

Qualitative Design - Paradigm

This study seeks to gather information from the teachers themselves to draw a clearer understanding of teacher morale. The combination of the different perspectives provided by using oral history narrative interviews of different teachers across the state of South Carolina may produce a more complete picture of the domain under study. This case study involved nine high school teachers, each representing different high schools and years of experience across South Carolina. The purpose of such a varied sample was to gain a broader interpretation and span a wider number of opinions from which themes will emerge. Because this study examined and interpreted the perceptions of what high school teachers/participants themselves see as factors that affect morale, an interpretive qualitative study approach was used.

Through oral history narrative interviews with teachers across the state, morale was studied. The responses were analyzed and interpreted to look for themes that will emerge. The findings represented characteristics teachers identified as impacting morale and thereby provided a framework for principals to use for improving the morale of high school teachers in South Carolina. The teachers’ perspective allowed the researcher to decipher and uncover more meaningful information into the problem and thus point to

possible solutions for principals. After teachers were identified and invited to participate, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews at a location was convenient for the participants. Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, each transcript was read and coded. In the process of open coding, every passage of the interview is studied to determine what exactly has been said and to label each passage with an adequate code (Boeije, 2002). The coded information was transferred to a table which included the page number, textual data, and the code. This table was then copied to an Excel spreadsheet so that the codes can be sorted. This process was done after each participants' interview as a constant comparative method used to look for patterns in the words of the participants responses and to present these patterns while at the same time staying close to the original construct of the lived experiences of the participants. Axial coding is a procedure where data are pieced together in new ways after open coding allowing connections between categories (Kolb, 2012).

The constant comparative method is framed by a focus of inquiry, through interviews or questionnaires, open-ended questioning that allows study participants to articulate their perceptions and experiences freely and spontaneously. Analyzing data in this format, allows the researcher to articulate perspectives from the participants' responses into salient categories of meaning and relationships that connects to the social processes under study (qdatraining website, n.d.).

Role of the Researcher in Data Collection

For this study, the primary instrument for collecting, analyzing and interpreting data will be the researcher. Therefore, in my role as the researcher, there are certain biases that I bring to the study. First, as a classroom teacher who has worked under 11

principals in my 29 years of teaching, I have my own views of factors that affect teacher morale. As such, I think this gives me leverage with the participants as a fellow educator in providing a level of comfort to speak candidly about their experiences. Additionally, some of the participants are colleagues or former colleagues and therefore conversations may have taken place in the past regarding the actions and behaviors of principals with whom we have worked. Thus, as the researcher, I must make a conscience effort to disregard prior knowledge while interviewing those participants.

Qualitative research can help researchers to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher as the human instrument in the field will use multiples methods to form constructs related to factors that affect teacher morale. The methods that was used surrounding the research questions were personal interviews to which teacher responses were coded for themes. Interviews were used to gather information from the teachers' perspective to identify behaviors used by principals that affects teacher morale.

Interview Protocol and Procedure

To identify factors that affect teacher morale from the perspective of the teachers themselves, interviews were used. Questions to guide the focus of the study will be:

Opening questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How many principals have you worked for?
3. Why did you choose teaching as a career?

Focused Questions RQ1:

RQ1) What professional experiences do high school teachers feel influences morale?

4. How important is morale in your job as an educator?
5. Describe moments in your teaching career when your morale was high?
6. In the times when your morale was high, what factors do you feel contributed to high morale?
7. Describe moments in your teaching career when your morale was low? If ever?
8. In the times when you experienced low morale, what do you feel could have been done differently?

Focused Questions RQ2:

RQ2) What administrative leadership characteristics do high school teachers feel contribute to morale?

9. What role do you feel administrative leadership plays in the morale of teachers?
10. How would you describe the administrative leaders for whom you have worked?
11. What influential characteristics or behaviors do you feel the administrators you worked for exhibited that increased or reduced morale?

Closing Questions:

12. If you could do it all over again, would you still choose teaching as a career?
13. Are there any other things you would like to tell me about this topic?

Teachers were interviewed individually at a location that is convenient for them.

Interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to gather data and identify common traits and factors that impact teacher morale. During the meeting, teachers received a consent letter that assured their confidentiality during the interview process.

Context of the Study

The researcher began data collection by interviewing high school teachers from various areas of the state. The researcher approached nine high school teachers through personal contact at workshops, via email, and teacher recommendations explaining the purpose of the study, the interview process, the nature of the study, and the guarantee of confidentiality. The researcher developed 13 open-ended questions for the interview. It was the intent of the researcher to invite discussion based on the questions. The researcher met with teachers and ask them for interviews. Once the teacher agreed to participate in the study an interview time and place was scheduled. The researcher recorded the interviews on a password protected cellphone, due to a minor setback that caused the projected date in which data collection was to begin to be pushed back. The delay and the tedious nature of transcribing was the reason behind the researcher changing the instrument used for recording.

Measures for Ethical Protection

The researcher recruited nine teachers that agreed to participate in the interview process. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study or decline to answer interview questions at any time. Teachers were informed that their identity will be not be disclosed at no time during the study nor will their names be used with responses placed in the report. Confidentiality and privacy of the participants remained throughout the entire study.

Audio taped interviews were transcribed using numbers to identify individual participants. Participants were also given a pseudonym in the report. The information

from interviews were kept in a secure location as well as identifiable information being eliminated. Interview recordings will be deleted after the completion of the study.

Data Collection and Criteria for Selecting Participants

Participant selection in the study were teachers with 10 to 20 years of teaching experience in a high school setting and have worked with more than one principal. The researcher used purposeful sampling to recruit participants. This involved asking colleagues at the school where the researcher is an employee how many years they have taught. Once those individuals were identified, they were then asked how many principals they have worked for in their teaching career. The researcher wanted teachers who has worked with more than one principal. After the teachers were identified that met the criteria, I shared with them the nature of the research I wanted to conduct, that it involved being interviewed, and asked if they would be willing to participant. I used this same method at two leadership workshops I attended during the school year and also through my contacts with former colleagues from other schools where I was an employee. This method resulted in three teachers from my current place of employment, three teachers from previous schools where I once worked, and three teachers from the two workshops collectively who agreed to participate in the study. With each participant, a time and place where the interview would be conducted was discussed. Before each interview, the researcher discussed the nature of the study, measures to maintain confidentiality, and the consent form that participants were to sign.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format but welcomed and encouraged open discussion. The interviews were audio recorded on a password protected cell phone. The recordings were then downloaded on a password protected laptop computer

that only the researcher had access to. The recordings were then uploaded in a transcription program called Temi. Once the transcribing was complete, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the researchers' email where they were opened and reviewed. The transcription program allows the researcher to listen to the audio recording while reviewing the transcript to make corrections where the instrument incorrectly interpreted a word or phrase. This process was used after each interview throughout the study. After the interviews were concluded and transcribed, the researcher provided a copy of the transcript to the teachers for review and to make any corrections or additions. Where it was feasible, the researcher followed up with the participant in person for them to review the transcript. In cases where distance was a factor, the researcher emailed the participants with a cover letter of what should be done. The teachers were asked to return the transcript to the researcher if there were any changes. Through this process, credibility of the transcripts was established.

Trustworthiness

It is important for the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection to create an atmosphere for participants to feel safe in sharing their responses. As the researcher I had varying degrees of familiarity with the participants; therefore, my ability to gain trust was not a stable variable. The researcher made every effort to make teachers feel comfortable and free to share their candid thoughts and experiences regarding leadership behaviors that affect teacher morale, this contributed to the trustworthiness of the data.

How and When Data Analysis will be Analyzed

Data was analyzed by using a transcription program for the recorded interviews the evening of or day after the interviews had taken place. The transcripts were reviewed for correctness. The researcher looked for commonality of responses and organized similar responses based on factors that teachers deemed important factors that impact morale. Also, once interviews are transcribed, the researcher followed up with participants to provide a copy of the transcript to authenticate their responses. The participants' responses were coded, and the researcher identified factors that impact morale through themes that emerged through this process.

Summary of Key Points

This chapter described the methodology used to identify principal behaviors that impact the morale of nine high school teachers across South Carolina. The interviews were transcribed, and common themes developed. Through teacher interviews, factors that impact teacher morale were identified and recorded as findings from the data. In Chapter 4 the results are presented from the interviews, a description of the participants, the interview questions, and a summary are included.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to determine what leadership behaviors or characteristics teachers perceived as impacting their morale. The two research questions that guided this study were as follows:

RQ1) What professional experiences do high school teachers feel influences morale?

RQ2) What administrative leadership characteristics do high school teachers feel contribute to morale?

Participants Overview

Participants for this research study included nine high school teachers from across the state of South Carolina who have between 10 to 20 years of teaching experience. The participants taught at various types of high schools across the state and were recruited by initial contact from the researcher at workshops, in the work environment, and by recommendation from other teachers. The instrument used for data collection were semi-structured interviews. The researcher and participant decided a location and time to meet to conduct the semi-structured interviews. Although there were nine participants recruited and interviewed, only four participants were selected in which a second interview was conducted. The selected participants were Patrice (20 years), Faith (12 years), Ursula (10 years), and Debbie (19 years).

Table 4.1 Participant Information

Teacher Participants	Participants' Pseudonym	Race	Years of Teaching	Number of Principals Worked Under	Type of School Currently Working In
Teacher 1	Belinda	African-American	17	5	Rural
Teacher 2	Valerie	African-American	17	9	Suburban
Teacher 3	George	Caucasian	15	5	Rural
Teacher 4	Patrice	African-American	20	11	Rural
Teacher 5	Faith	African-American	12	4	Rural
Teacher 6	Megan	Caucasian	12	2	Rural
Teacher 7	Ursula	African-American	10	3	Suburban
Teacher 8	Debbie	African-American	19	5	Suburban
Teacher 9	Helen	Caucasian	18	4	Suburban

Process by Which Data were Generated, Gathered, and Recorded

At each meeting, the researcher explained the nature of the study, the method that will be used for collecting data, measures to maintain confidentiality, and obtained consent. Data was generated by participants responses to the focus questions during the interviews. Seven of the nine interviews were audio recorded and the length of time for the interviews varied from eight minutes to thirty-five minutes. Two of the interviews were conducted via phone due to distance and time constraints. Upon completion of each interview, the researcher used a transcription program to transcribe the interviews within one to two days and provided a copy to the participants to review and make any corrections or additions. After feedback from each participant, the transcripts were coded.

Data Analysis and Results

The results of this study began with obtaining information from the participants on years of teaching experience, the number of principals each participant worked for, and their path into the teaching profession. My relationship with the participants varied from colleagues to complete strangers that were approached at two different leadership meetings sponsored by the State Department of Education. From these meetings, three participants were recruited that met the criteria for the study. Table 4.1 represents the data for each participant.

Participants were asked “Why did you choose teaching as a career?” The purpose of this question was to provide a light-hearted entry into the interview where participants will feel comfortable to share their experiences. The path that led each participant to a career in teaching had some similarities and differences. Several participants entered the profession as a result of a change in their college major, while two participants choose teaching as a second career. Others wanted a sense of purpose and to make a difference in the lives of children. One participant took a teacher cadet course in high school and decided to become a teacher instead of going into the Air Force. Finally, another participant did not see anyone that looked like her nor shared the same passion she had for languages.

Their journeys into this very demanding and most notable profession took twists and turns. They came to discover that this is what they were born to do, as several participants shared. The remainder of Chapter Four will discuss participants’ responses during the interview process and the themes that emerged.

Overwhelmingly, the participants believe that teacher morale is very important and could be a determining factor if a teacher stays or leaves a school or the teaching profession altogether. According to participants, morale can affect teacher productivity and thus impact student achievement as well as embracing the mission and vision of the school established by the principal. When morale is high, respondents feel a sense of belonging and are willing to take ownership in whatever task is assigned with enthusiasm. An ethos of support and respect from administration and colleagues, helps teachers put their best foot forward and make their jobs easier to do was revealed by several participants.

In contrast, when a teacher does not have support or the resources to do their job, this creates feelings of helplessness and diminishes morale says Debbie, a 19-year veteran teacher. Faith revealed that not being valued or treated like a professional can also take its toll on the morale of teachers. From the perspective of the participants, morale is too important in the work lives of teachers and can impact teaching and learning.

Teachers want to do their jobs to the best of their ability. In order for this to happen, conditions must be suitable in the work environment. Morale can greatly impact teachers in various ways based to the dynamics of the school culture. As participants previously stated, lack of support and respect by leadership can affect a teacher's classroom performance as well as the teachers' decision to remain at that school or in the profession. Also, morale can affect a teachers' feeling of worth causing them to not put much effort into their work or lack enthusiasm for the work that they do. In contrast, when teachers feel supported, respected, and validated, they will buy into the vision and

mission set forth by the principal as well as give their best to any task they are given to help the school organization meet its goals.

Participants' lived experiences with high and low teacher morale revealed commonalities and variations. High morale occurrences for Patrice involved having autonomy and leadership responsibilities. She appreciated her principals for seeing something in her work performance that garnered the attention and trust. For Ursula, she experienced high morale when she was celebrated or shown appreciation for all she does as a teacher. An environment that was safe, conducive for teaching and learning, and promoted professional growth were cited by Faith, Debbie, and Ursula when they experienced high morale. Other dynamics of the work environment where the teacher participants experienced high morale were relationships with the principal, their colleagues and the students. Debbie, who has been teaching for 19 years, shared that getting along with peers, students wanting to learn, and few discipline problems boosts her morale.

Additionally, the participants revealed their perspective on the role of leadership in their experiences of high morale. A principal that was caring, supportive, empathetic, and trusting made many of the teachers feel good about their job and the desire to go above and beyond. In like manner, principals that valued teachers' opinion, treated teachers as professionals, invited them to participate in making decisions on school related issues, and easy to talk with heightened the morale as some participants disclosed. Patrice, a 20-year veteran teacher, communicated her moments of high morale which involved her principal trusting her classroom practices and asking her to be a peer evaluator. Faith, a teacher for 12 years, also had the same experience when asked to be a

teacher leader and to work with mentoring new teachers by her principal. It made her feel appreciated as a teacher that the principal would trust her with that assignment.

The teacher participants share moments in their teaching career when they experienced low morale. There were some common elements to their experiences as well as some unexpected ones. Faith spoke of the principals' uncaring and unsympathetic behavior towards personal issues she experienced with her health. Unfortunately, the administrator did not provide the emotional support she needed.

Faith and Ursula morale was decreased when discipline was not handled and when they were left to defend their actions regarding issues with student behavior. Patrice and Ursula described working with principals who did not want to report high discipline infractions because of their desire to obtain a higher position. The respondents felt that these principals only cared about themselves and how things look to build their resume' as opposed to making the environment a safe haven for all. Their perceptions were that these principals used the position as a stepping stone instead of a real concern for the teachers and students in the schools they were leading. Patrice, who has been teaching for 20 years stated, "That added to low teacher morale when an administrator is more concerned with self and wanting to build their portfolio." Patrice and Faith shared how the principals would make demands through various forms of communication, making such statements as, "you have to do this, you have to do that" or "this is mandatory and have it in by a particular time." They both shared how the tone of the memo or email was off putting. Debbie described one principal as unapproachable and difficult to communicate with because of this person's disposition and the tense working

environment that was created. Although, she stayed at the school under this particular principal, she indicated that there was a very high turnover rate that principal's first year.

District office mandate contributed to the low morale of Faith and Debbie. The district decided to institute practices, which the Faith felt were not being treating teachers as professionals, also teachers were asked to do tasks that they felt clearly should have been done by the district curriculum coordinators. Debbie shared the demands imposed on her and her colleagues because of a grant that was written in which no teachers had input. The paperwork was excessive and overwhelming and really brought morale down for her and the teachers at her school.

The themes that emerged based on the participants' experiences of high teacher morale were environment, recognition, relationships, and administrative support and trust. And for low teacher morale, the themes were principal behavior and district office mandates. These themes indicate factors that the teacher participants perceived as important in in their morale and in helping them to perform or hinder their teaching responsibilities. Table 4.2 provides a list of the themes that emerged during the coding process from the response of the participants during the interview.

Table 4.2 Emergent Themes from Participants' Responses of High and Low Morale

Themes	Selected Participant Responses
Environment	A positive, safe environment. An environment that was conducive to people growing professionally and where our opinions were heard. A conducive work environment.
Recognition	Principal that went above and beyond by showing the staff how much they were appreciated Principal did a week-long teacher appreciation Celebrated for all the things that teachers do

Relationships	<p>High camaraderie with members in my department</p> <p>Getting along with peers [colleagues] and as well as students wanting to learn</p> <p>Planning this trip out of the country for students</p> <p>A sense of community in the classroom where students are taking ownership of their purpose and role</p> <p>Feeling supported by colleagues, and everyone working together to accomplish the same goal</p> <p>Principal who promotes opportunities for team building/relationships in and out of school setting</p>
Administrative support and trust	<p>Principals that support and appreciate my efforts</p> <p>Principal's trust in her and her colleagues</p> <p>The principal valued their opinions</p> <p>A caring administration and one that supports decisions made by teachers</p> <p>An administration that trusted her judgment</p>
Principal Behavior	<p>Principal that was very stern, tough, it was so tense</p> <p>Principal focus was using the position as a stepping stone to become a superintendent</p> <p>Principal's uncaring attitude really had me down....it was a really low point and a major challenge for me"</p> <p>Principal wanted teachers to tolerate the children's behavior at all cost</p> <p>Principal that questioned everything I did</p>
District office mandate	<p>Excessive paperwork and time being wasted doing tasks for a grant</p> <p>Having to write curriculum guides</p> <p>Having to clock in like factory workers</p>

The role of principal leadership on teacher morale can be very impactful. Patrice, Faith, Ursula and Debbie are of the opinion that administrative leadership is very important in the morale of teachers. Ursula feel that administrative leadership is so important that it determines if a teacher will stay or leave a school or the profession altogether. Patrice and Ursula stressed that administrative leadership plays a pivotal role in the morale of teachers because they set the tone for the school and for the year. Ursula further elaborated that administrative leadership is responsible for setting the culture of a school, which is very important. Patrice declared that principal leadership is the guiding

force in teacher morale. Debbie shared that the vision and culture of the school is set by the school leadership and as such can mitigate the revolving door of teachers leaving the profession. She explained that when there's a lack of leadership skills, it trickles down to a lot of chaos and unhappiness everywhere. An interesting perspective arose from Patrice who talked about the number of years the principal has taught, before they became a principal. She shared how the face of administration is changing with individuals becoming principals who have only three to five years teaching experience in the classroom. For this 20-year veteran teacher, her perception is that these individuals have not been in the trenches of teaching long enough to provide the support she needs. The themes that emerged from participants' responses to low teacher morale were related to the behavior or actions of the principal and mandates or initiatives from the district office. The experiences from the participants shows the immense need for principals and district office personnel to be aware of actions and behaviors that impact the morale of their teachers.

The teacher participants were asked to describe the principals with whom they worked and to match their descriptions with the leadership style they feel most of the principals possessed, along with indicating if these qualities increased or reduced morale. In her 20th year as an educator, Patrice has worked with 11 principals. Faith, a 12-year veteran and Debbie, a 19-year veteran teacher, have work with five principals. Ursula's has worked with three principals in her 10 years of teaching. Table 4.3 gives a participants' description of the types of principals they worked with and the type of leadership style that most closely matched the description. The participants also

associated the description and leadership style with having the propensity to increase or reduce teacher morale.

Table 4.3 Leadership Descriptions and Styles that Increased or Reduced Morale

Leadership Descriptions Perceived by Teachers	Leadership Style	Increased or Reduced Morale
Dictator, stern, mean, bully, stoic, micromanager	Authoritarian	The practices exhibited by the principal as describe by the participants were not giving the teacher access to resources needed for instruction, not having the relationship with teachers that fosters open communication, expressing their opinions, or participating in making decisions. Additionally, participants shared the tone used with various forms of communication by the principal as demanding or stressing the urgency. Not trusting others to manager or monitor tasks required. Checking and double checking as some participants describe. These practices decreased teacher morale.
Supportive, encouraging, caring, empathetic, trusting	Democratic	Trust teachers to take on leadership roles, mentor other teachers, encourage professional growth through leadership responsibilities, and giving teachers opportunities to have a voice and participate in making decision were practices by principal leadership that increased morale. Also, showing concern and empathy for the personal lives of teachers boosted morale.
Loosey-goosey, relaxed, disengaged	Laissez-faire	The practices experienced by teacher participants' perceived descriptions were not communication with teachers regarding spur of the moment decisions that interfered with their instructional time, not handling discipline consistently, being playful and friendly with students, who ultimately did not take the administration seriously when it was

		time of discipline. These practices decreased morale.
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When given the opportunity to offer some final thoughts regarding the topic of administrative leadership and teacher morale, Patrice concluded the interview by saying, “I’m hoping principals understand the influence they have on teachers and students and that it will be helpful for them to see teachers as allies and not liabilities. To let teachers know they are stakeholders and part of the team. Ursula imparted these closing words about teacher morale being a very hot topic to discuss in light of the teacher shortage and colleges not graduating the amounts of students into the teaching profession to sustain it. She also communicated that principals need to find ways to encourage new teachers to stay and retain the ones that are already there. Debbie, thoughtfully recapped, the power of having a caring administrator. Leaders who are supportive not only of time in school, your life in school, but value your time with your family. She also spoke of how gatherings off campus strengthened collegial relationships. She added that the principal encourages time for gathering and tries to be there and attend other functions relating to the personal lives of the teachers which makes those relationships stronger. She concluded by reiterating how impactful strong leadership is and how “leaders should realize that the culture of the school is sometimes what makes and breaks the revolving door of teachers at a school.”

The teachers interviewed shared an oral history of their educational experiences that impacted on their morale. Themes that emerged from this study were the importance of relationships, being supportive and trusting, showing appreciation, and establishing an environment that is safe and conducive for teaching and learning. Through their various

experiences, certain leadership practices were identified that had an impact on morale. The stories from each teacher describing their experiences of high and low morale and the factors that contributed to each was valuable in providing an awareness of practices by administrative leadership that impact morale.

Summary of Key Points

This chapter offered a presentation of the participants' responses to the interview questions and demonstrated the relationship between the narrative data and the research questions. A description of how participants were selected, years of experience of the participants, and the number of principals with whom these teachers worked was discussed. The instrument used for this study was a semi-structured interview protocol with narrative data responses being recorded, transcribed, and coded. The responses from the interviews were presented as a compilation in some cases and in others a direct quote. It was important for me, as the researcher, that the participants' experiences were heard in their own voice.

Chapter 5 will provide an overview of the study, the findings, and implications as well as recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provides school leaders with knowledge of practices that increase teacher morale as well as practices that decrease morale. As such, principals should make a concerted effort to implement the practices and behaviors that promote high teacher morale so that teachers can effectively perform the duties of teaching and ultimately improve student achievement.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of leadership on teacher morale. The researcher's aimed was to determine what behaviors do principals exhibit that contributes to morale as perceived by teachers. The two research questions that guided this study were:

- 1) What administrative leadership characteristics do high school teachers feel contribute to morale?
- 2) What professional experiences do high school teachers feel influences morale?

The participants of this study were high school teachers with 10 to 20 years teaching experience who have worked under two or more principals. The participants were from different regions in South Carolina. Oral history narratives through semi-structured interviews was the measurement tool used for collecting data in this study.

Summary of Results

The participants in this study conveyed how important teacher morale is and its impact could determine if a teacher chooses to stay or leave the profession. Patrice and

Ursula described working for a principal with aspirations of becoming a superintendent and placing unrealistic expectations on the teachers regarding student discipline and initiatives that did not make sense with the demographic of students they served. She stated how she hated her job, hated teaching, and her morale being very low. Ursula left after the first year under that principal. Prior research shows that teacher morale plays a pivotal role in the success of school and if teachers are not happy with their job, this could negatively impact the students (Green, 2010). In like manner, teacher job satisfaction is associated with low morale and high turnover thus weakening the functions of a school (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Moreover, teacher morale has far reaching affects based on the teachers' emotional view of their job and work environment (He & Xuan, 2002). Morale can either be high or low and is affected by many factors, such as teachers' perceptions, experiences, and working conditions (Senechal et. al, 2016).

According to the research, high teacher morale is attributed to the following factors, teaching feeling they are valuable, participating in the decision-making process, and having a voice (Xiaofu & Qiwen, 2008; Ingersoll, 2003; Ladd, 2011;). Also, being praised and recognized for the work that they do, having instructional and technical support, and opportunities to grow professionally increases the morale of teachers (Mackenzie, 2007). Not to mention, a trusting learning environment where teachers are respected, appreciated, have open communication between the principal and staff, and supportive administrators (Mackenzie, 2007; Willis & Varner, 2010). The aforementioned factors were also expressed by the participants in the study. Ursula stated how the principal celebrated teachers for all that they do, while Patrice expressed having the autonomy to do what was in the best interest of her students and appreciated the

support of her principal trusting her ability and judgment to make decisions regarding instruction.

Other factors that heighten teacher morale for several participants was the opportunity to grow professionally by being teacher leaders. Patrice was asked to be a model teacher and peer evaluator by one of the principals she worked under. She appreciated the principal seeing something in her she did not see in herself. Faith and Debbie's high morale was fueled by students wanting to learn, being excited about learning, and coming back to say thank you. Faith was so inspired and fueled by her students' enthusiasm about learning that she took the students to France and Spain. The research supports these experiences. Teachers exhibiting high morale, go above and beyond in their work, put more effort into their work and students are the benefactors (Crane & Green, 2013). Also, administrative and collegial relationships, administrative support, encouraging professional growth (Crane & Green, 2013), supporting and developing teachers, and a school climate and culture conducive to teaching and learning promotes high teacher morale (Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, and Ma, 2012; Crane & Green, 2013).

Based on their experiences, participants shared moments in their teaching career when they had high morale. The following factors were gleaned from their responses: Patrice, Faith, and Ursula said being appreciated, celebrated, and supported by the principal; Faith and Debbie, cited experiences regarding student engagement; Patrice appreciated having autonomy; Patrice, Faith, and Debbie esteemed being trusted, have leadership responsibilities, and supportive colleagues, as well as valuing principals being approachable and easy to communicate with; Faith was high on being treated as

professionals. The research shows that teacher morale is high when there is a learning environment where teachers are respected, open communication, supportive administrators that also invite teachers to take a part in making decisions (Ingersoll, 2003; Ladd, 2011; Crane & Green, 2013). Student achievement can also be increased in schools built on teachers' job satisfaction, collegial work relationships (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller, & Mickelson, 2015) and work environment (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). Moreover, morale is also high when teachers are empowered, having a voice, (Ingersoll, 2003; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005), quality professional development, and autonomy (Crane & Green, 2013).

External factors that involves principal's oversight has been found to be one of the factors that cause low morale. For example, accountability mandates that are handed down from state and district supervisors (Huysman, 2008; Stearns, Banerjee, Moller & Mickelson, 2015). Other factors contributing to low morale are teachers not being treated fairly, respected, valued, or recognized by administration (Crane & Green, 2013). Additionally, teacher job dissatisfaction (Arani & Abbasi, 2004; Borman & Dowling, 2008), school culture (Huysman, 2007; Mackenzie, 2007; Willis & Varner, 2010), as well as a relationship between administrators and teachers that is negative (Barth, 2006) lowers teacher morale.

Low morale experienced by participants were being undermined by the principal, principal not supportive or showing empathy, and initiatives by the district office. Patrice and Ursula had the unfortunate experience of working with principals who had district office ambitions and no real concern for the teachers and students they served; being principal was a stepping stone and to build their resumes. These experiences were

described by some as a very low point in their career. For some they did not return to that school. Low teacher morale can make the difference of a teacher staying in the profession or leaving or impacting the teachers' capacity to function in the classroom.

RQ2) What administrative leadership characteristics do high school teachers feel contribute to morale?

Participants strongly feel that administrative leadership plays an important role in the morale of teachers. Debbie and Ursula both shared that the principal sets that tone of the school and the environment they create can have a positive or negative effect on teachers and students. Similarly, Patrice viewed the role of the principal as a “guiding force” giving them energy by speaking words of encouragement, validating what teachers do, supporting them, showing concern for their personal lives as well as their professional lives. The leadership of the principal can make or break a school and affect a teachers' decision to stay or leave was the sentiment of Ursula.

The research confirms that the school environment must be conducive to teaching and learning and that the climate influences the teachers' ability to do their job effectively (Arani & Abbasi, 2004). Water, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) study showed a significant relationship between leadership and student achievement by leaders who advocate for change, protect, support and value the individuals of their educational institutions. Principals have significant effects on change initiation at school (Balyer & Ozcan, 2012).

Participants were asked to describe the leaders for whom they have worked, their leadership style and if it increased or reduced morale. Principals the were describes as dictator, stern, stoic, and micromanagers were associated with authoritarian style of leadership that reduced morale. Principals that were described as supportive, caring,

empathetic, and that encourage teachers voicing their opinions and making decisions were associated with the democratic leadership style that increased morale. Participants who described their principals as laidback, loosey-goosey, and relaxed were associated with a laissez-faire style of leadership thus decreasing morale.

As transcripts were coded and examined for themes, it was interesting to discover that although the participants came from different parts of the state, some of their descriptions of the principals they have worked under were similar. The negative descriptors ascribed to some of the principals by participants exhibited characteristics that contributed to their low morale. Also, the positive descriptions given to principals by participants exhibited characteristics that contributed to high morale.

The participants' lived experiences support what existing research says about teacher morale. The research shows that a learning environment with supportive administrator is a factor that is linked to teacher morale (Willis & Varner, 2010; Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011, Crane & Green, 2013). Positive school culture, building relationships, fostering collegiality, and collaboration were other factors that increased teacher morale according to Patrice and Debbie. Working conditions, collegial relationships (Ladd, 2011; Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, & Ma, 2012), professional growth, teacher autonomy (Crane & Green, 2013), motivating and celebrating teachers (Green, 2010; Anderson, 2008; Bommer, O'Donnell & White, 2005) heightens teacher morale. Debbie and Faith talked about protecting teachers' time, handling student discipline issues consistently, trusting, listening and communication as behaviors that increase teacher morale. A relationship of trust (Barth, 2006) and alleviating barriers in the

working environment that affects teachers' ability to perform high quality instruction (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014) are leadership qualities that boost morale.

Leadership characteristics and behaviors that decrease morale according to Debbie, Faith and Patrice are lack of respect, trust, support, and recognition. Debbie and Faith attributed decisions being made to benefit a few, lack of visibility in the school, being impersonal and excessive paperwork that wastes teachers time contributing to low morale. Negative, stressful school culture, inconsistent discipline, and lack of support for professional growth were pointed out by Faith, Patrice, and Ursula. Research shows that lack of recognition affects teacher morale; when teachers perceive that their efforts are not being acknowledged results in low morale (Huysman, 2008; Mackenzie, 2007; Reed, 2010). Unpleasant school incidents that occur gives teachers the impression that they are not valued or respected, thus contributing to low morale (Mackenzie, 2007). Leadership behavior by the school principal and the climate they create for teachers have an impact on teacher morale (Huysman, 2007). Lastly, research confirms that if the relationship between principals and teachers are frightful, competitive, skeptical, and corrosive, these qualities will spread throughout the school, diminishing the each other's lives and their schools (Barth, 2006).

Debbie stressed the importance of relationships between the principal and teachers, with colleagues, and how meaningful it is for leadership to foster that inside and outside of the school. Patrice hoped that principals realize the influence they have on teachers and students and that it would be helpful for them to see teachers as allies and not a liability. That teachers are stakeholders and a member of the team.

And finally, Ursula discussed the teacher shortage and how few college students are pursuing a career in education. She stressed how important this topic was and that principals need to find ways to keep the veteran teachers they already have and encourage the new teachers to stay in the profession.

The findings of this study support the existing research. Principal leadership has an impact on teacher morale. The morale of teachers can have a far-reaching implication for student learning, the health of the teacher, and the sounding of the school (Binova, 2002). Further, most people can identify behaviors of school leaders that they remember as being effective (Crane & Green, 2013). Leaders can have a positive or negative impact on achievement depending on the school or classroom practices they choose to focus their attention (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). As guardians of time and structure, school leadership are instrumental in creating necessary conditions for collaboration by providing the time needed for teachers to work together (Crane & Green, 2013). Effective leaders know how to choose and use appropriate practices to bring about change to the school culture such as promoting cooperation, cohesion, well-being among staff, and a shared purpose and vision (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Teachers believe they are a part of a strong professional community when there is a clear mission, school pride, open communication with leadership, trust and collegial relationship among colleagues, a focus on collective learning, and a sense of belonging (Stearns, Banerjee, Moller, & Mickelson, 2015). Finally, principals must celebrate good teaching by finding ways to encourage and inspire new teachers, reaffirm veteran teachers, and recognize the hard-work and dedication that teachers provide from day to day (Childress, 2014).

Recommendations for Future Research

Most of the existing literature focused on teacher morale included quantitative or mixed methods and focused on elementary or middle school teachers and the use of surveys. Although my study was exclusively qualitative, the responses support the existing literature regarding leadership behaviors that impact teacher morale as perceived by teachers. My study expands on the existing literature by using an oral history narrative approach to explore the factors that impact teacher morale from the perspective of high school teachers.

My study helps shed light on leadership behaviors that teacher perceive increase or decrease morale. It is important for leaders to use practices that enhance teacher morale, because of the effect it could have on student learning. This would be an area of future research. Due to the sample focusing exclusively on high school teachers, it would be interesting to discover the oral history of elementary and middle school teachers across the state or beyond regarding leadership behavior and teacher morale. Another area for future search would be using a survey instrument to determine more broadly if the leadership style matches the oral description that teachers used to describe their principals or interview principals to determine how they categorized themselves.

The majority of my participants were females, specifically, six Black, two White and the only male in the study was White. It would be interesting to further investigate how gender and race impact perceptions of leadership behaviors and teacher morale with a slightly larger and more diverse group. Additionally, decreasing the range for years of experience to one to five years or increasing the years of experience to 20-30 years would be helpful in adding to the body of literature.

Conclusion

Schools would not be schools without teachers and students. There is a saying that, “children are our most valuable resources” and they should be protected. In schools, “teachers are our most valuable resources” and they too, should be protected. That is the role of the principal. To protect our teachers and students and provide a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment where both can thrive. The behaviors of school leaders can determine the success or failure of the organizational culture based on how well they navigate the complexities of the school setting. Leaders must be effective, able to adapt, ever-changing, team-oriented, effective communicators, problem solvers, and transformational to succeed in the complex school environment (Du Plessis, Conley, & Hlongwane, 2006). The principal sets the tone for the school climate, by establishing trust, which is the foundation of building organizational relationships (Bryk et. al, 2010; Bryk & Schnieder, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). The stories shared by the nine participants of this study echoes the same results. Administrative leadership is crucial to building relationships in the school, supporting teachers, showing trust, and being good communicators. It is these behaviors and others that promote high teacher morale. In contrast, lack of trust, support, and communication along with adverse relationships can cause low teacher morale. One participant summed it up quite eloquently, “At the heart of all this, is people. And if you can’t start with and invest in people, then you can’t get anything else done. You’ve lost. You’ve lost it.” School, district, and state leaders need to be reminded that at the heart of every school are teachers. Teachers like the participants shared in the interviews their love for teaching, working with students, and being energized by them. These participants know it is their calling, and they were made to do

this. These teachers, in spite of some rough days, get up and do it all over again. These teachers say they would choose teaching as a career if given another choice. Hopefully, this study will cause educational leaders at the very least, to reflect on their own practices and check the morale gauge at their schools.

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APPENDIX A

IRB LETTER



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH
DECLARATION of NOT RESEARCH

Caroline Gadson
Instruction and Teacher Education
College of Education
Wardlaw 256
Columbia, SC 29208 USA

Re: **Pro00081176**

Dear Ms. Caroline Gadson:

This is to certify that research study entitled *The Impact of Principal Leadership on Teacher Morale* was received on **8/2/2018** by the Office of Research Compliance, which is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). The Office of Research Compliance, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board, has determined that the referenced research study is not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq.

No further oversight by the USC IRB is required. However, the investigator should inform the Office of Research Compliance prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the status of the project and require another review.

If you have questions, contact Lisa M. Johnson at lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu or (803) 777-6670.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Johnson".

Lisa M. Johnson
ORC Assistant Director
and IRB Manager

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear Teachers,

I am a student enrolled in the Doctoral program at the University of South Carolina. Currently, I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled Perceptions of Principal Leadership on Teacher Morale. The purpose of the study is to determine which leadership behaviors or characteristics have an impact on morale as perceived by teachers. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be involved semi-structured interviews about teacher morale.

In particular, you will be asked questions about various aspects of the job or experiences with the principal that impact teacher morale. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place and should last about 20 to 30 minutes. The interviews will be recorded so that I can accurately transcribe what is discussed. The audio recordings will only be reviewed by me and destroyed upon completion of the study.

Data collected will be kept in a locked fireproof safe where only I can access it. Interview responses are anonymous, which means that no one will know what your answers are, and your identity will not be revealed. Also, you will not be asked to disclose any identifiable information with any of the questions in the interview.

Please feel free to ask any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 803-XXX-XXXX or at gadson66@aol.com. Thank you for your consideration. Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free not to participate, or to stop participating at any time, for any reason. If you decide to take part in this study, please sign the consent form below.

Sincerely,

Caroline E. Gadson

Consent

I have read, and I understand the provided information. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form for my own records. If you wish to participate, you should sign below.

Signature of Subject / Participant

Date

Signature of Qualified Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opening Questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How many principals have you worked for?
3. Why did you choose teaching as a career?

Focused Questions RQ1:

- RQ1) What professional experience do high school teachers feel influences morale?
4. How important is morale in your job as an educator?
 5. Describe moments in your teaching career when your morale was high?
 6. In the times when your morale was high, what factors do you feel contributed to high morale?
 7. Describe moments in your teaching career when your morale was low? If ever?
 8. In the times when you experienced low morale, what do you feel could have been done differently?

Focused Questions RQ2:

- RQ2) What administrative leadership characteristics do high school teachers feel contribute to morale?
9. What role do you feel administrative leadership plays in the morale of teachers?
 10. How would you describe the administrative leaders for whom you worked?
 11. What influential characteristics or behaviors do you feel the administrators you worked exhibited that increased or reduced morale?

Closing Questions:

12. If you could do it all over again, would you still choose teaching as a career?
13. Are there any other things you would like to tell me about this topic?

APPENDIX D

REVIEW OF TRANSCRIPT LETTER

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you so much for participating in the interview on Perceptions of Principal Leadership on Teacher Morale. Your involvement in this research will help give insight on this critical and important issue. A copy of the participant consent form has been provided for your records. Also, please review the copy your transcript for accuracy and to see if there is any information that needs to be added or reworded for clarification.

Sincerely,

Caroline E. Gadson